



Go Outside and Play!

Children have a need to connect with nature. Encourage your children to play and learn outside, and keep them safe in the process.

Outdoor play promotes healthy development.

Research shows that as our children become disconnected from nature, they have a higher risk of obesity, dislike—and even fear—of the outdoors, and behavioral problems requiring medication.

Outdoor play provides learning opportunities.

When children play outside, they have limitless opportunities to learn about science, observation skills, language and literacy, social skills, math, visual-spatial skills, music and movement, and the arts.

Outdoor play requires adult supervision.

Supervision is more than just watching for falls and bad behavior. Teach your children how to properly use toys and play equipment and help them if they struggle. Know how to respond to emergencies and injuries.

Outdoor equipment should be appropriate.

Consider your child's age and abilities when selecting play equipment and toys. If you have more than one child, separate toys according to age group. Consider these three age categories: up to 2 years, 2–5 years, and 5–12 years.

Outdoor fall surfaces should be soft.

Your child will fall, so make sure surfaces beneath equipment such as slides, swings, and jungle gyms are soft enough to break the fall and prevent injury. For example, loose materials such as sand or gravel are good fall surfaces, but not for infants and toddlers who might swallow them. Grass, concrete, asphalt, and dirt, on the other hand, are not acceptable. A one foot fall onto concrete can cause a concussion.

Outdoor equipment must be maintained.

Conduct routine equipment maintenance based on manufacturer recommendations and [Consumer Product Safety Commission](http://www.consumerproduct.gov) guidelines. Check for broken equipment, gaps, or entanglement hazards. Periodically seal, stain, or paint wooden equipment to prevent deterioration. Check for missing or damaged parts. Remove scattered debris, litter, or rocks.

Sources: Southern Early Childhood Association, "Giving Children a Safe Place to Play," email message, May 12, 2010. Yamini Durani, Playground Safety, <http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid_safe/outdoor/playground.html#>, July 2011, accessed on March 15, 2012.



Prepared by: Southern Early Childhood Association
PO Box 55930, Little Rock, AR 72215-5930
www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org